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March 4, 2016

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Cynthia A. Harding, M.P.H.
Interim Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia A. Harding". The signature is written in a cursive style.

SUBJECT: **STATUS REPORT ON ISSUES RELATED TO EXIDE**

On February 16, 2016, Supervisor Solis introduced a motion instructing the Health Agency Director to report back to the Board at its March 8, 2016 meeting, and monthly thereafter, on the progress of the issues related to Exide Technologies (Exide), a battery recycling facility in Vernon, California. This report provides an update on these issues and related efforts.

Background

The Exide facility was operated as a battery recycling plant for decades under a temporary permit, and resulted in the spread of environmental contamination into the surrounding community, including densely populated residential areas. For years, residents in the neighborhoods surrounding the Exide facility expressed concern about the safety of the facility and its impact on the health of the community. In 2012, a Health Risk Assessment was released by the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) indicating an elevated health risk to people living and working in an area extending approximately 1.75 miles from the Exide facility.

While the Exide facility was permanently closed in March 2015, it left behind a legacy of environmental contamination extending approximately 1.75 miles into the surrounding communities of Maywood, Huntington Park, Commerce, Boyle Heights, and East Los Angeles. This contamination potentially affects 5,000 to 10,000 homes, and represents a continuing risk to tens of thousands who reside or work in the area.

Public Health Implications of Exide

For many years, community residents and workers have been exposed to emissions from the Exide facility including lead, benzene, arsenic, and 1,3-butadiene. Elevated exposure to these substances

increases the risk of developing cancer and other illnesses, including anemia and immune system disorders, as well as lowers life expectancy. The SCAQMD Health Risk Assessment performed in 2012 indicated that non-Exide workers employed near the facility were exposed to an incremental cancer risk as high as 156 in one million, or 7 times the next highest cancer risk attributed to a single facility in the South Coast Air Basin. Even though the Exide facility was permanently closed in March 2015, exposed individuals will carry this increased risk for the rest of their lives.

While emissions from the Exide facility have ceased, the settling of particulate in the surrounding community resulted in elevated lead contamination in soil and dust. This lead-contaminated soil and dust represents a continuing source of exposure that could lead to health effects in children, including lower IQ, learning disabilities, behavior disorders, hearing problems, and abnormal bone growth. In adults, elevated lead exposure is associated with kidney and nerve damage, anemia, high blood pressure, and problems with fertility, memory, mood, coordination, and vision.

County Role in Protecting the Communities Near Exide

Due to the substantial impact of the Exide facility on the health of residents and workers in surrounding communities and the slow pace of clean-up activities by the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), your Board has taken a series of actions since 2014 to define a proactive role for the County. In March 2014, your Board created the County Toxic Threat Strike Team, consisting of the Department of Public Health (DPH), County Counsel, the Department of Public Works, and the Fire Department, and instructed the Strike Team to address the health risks due to the Exide facility. Since that time, County agencies have worked tirelessly on this issue and are focusing their efforts on the following three actions now that the facility is closed: (1) rapid assessment of residential properties potentially impacted by Exide; (2) addressing the current and future health needs of residents in the affected neighborhoods; and (3) influencing State decision-making to address health needs of the communities near Exide with greater urgency, including the allocation of increased funding for rapid, complete assessment and cleanup of the affected residences.

Rapid Assessment of Residential Properties

DTSC has stated that up to 10,000 homes within 1.75 miles from Exide are potentially contaminated with lead. DTSC has tested only 2% of these properties to date, and the results suggest that at least 4,000 properties may require cleanup. Initially, DTSC used a conventional approach to soil testing and prioritizing of the 10,000 homes, which, if continued, would have taken many years to complete and likely cost in excess of \$50 million. To increase the pace of soil testing, in early 2015 DPH proposed an alternative field screening method to rapidly test and prioritize these affected residential properties. The County's methods employ a field-based strategy for collecting and analyzing environmental samples for metals using x-ray diffraction technology on-site, rather than relying solely on sending samples out for laboratory analyses. In November 2015, your Board directed County staff to perform rapid testing on properties in order to demonstrate the method's effectiveness and expedite the assessment process, and allocated approximately \$2 million to support this effort and related activities. Subsequently the State announced it would employ similar rapid testing methods. A series of meetings were held between the County and DTSC to ensure field coordination and consistency in the methods utilized.

Commencing in November 2015, the County team developed and distributed bilingual informational materials to residents explaining the County's efforts and the health impacts of lead (Attachment 1).

Neighborhood canvassing began concurrently to educate residents on the rapid testing methods and secure access agreements to assess 500 individual properties. Public health nurses and environmental health specialists spoke directly to over 1,450 residents and collected 518 access agreements during the months of November, December, and January.

Residential soil testing began on February 29, 2016, as 12 three-person teams were deployed in the neighborhoods surrounding Exide. These teams are testing properties at a rate of approximately 45 per day. It is projected that the targeted 500 properties will be fully tested and assessed by March 11, 2016. The day after the testing is completed at a property, County staff speak with residents, providing them with a packet of information which includes the results of lead testing on their property. Further, County staff will answer questions and provide other assistance, such as resources for enrollment in health insurance and how to obtain blood lead testing.

Addressing Current and Future Health Needs of Residents

Environmental contamination caused by the Exide facility has raised the risk of a number of health conditions in the surrounding communities. Therefore, DPH is working to ensure access to care and specialized health screening for the early identification and treatment of potential health problems, along with health education about these conditions.

DPH, in partnership with the Departments of Health Services and Mental Health, is implementing the following actions, during the period of March-May 2016.

- 1) Launch a healthcare access initiative to include insurance enrollment for eligible residents and pathways to care for those that are unable to be enrolled.
- 2) Educate the medical community about the elevated cancer risks of this patient population, so that patients may be appropriately directed to screening services needed for early cancer detection, diagnosis, and treatment.
- 3) Promote early screening, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for childhood asthma, including affordable access to medications and asthma education for patients, families, and local schools.
- 4) Work with local school districts to develop resources for cognitive and behavioral screening, as well as interventions to assist children with learning difficulties, behavioral conditions, and other functional problems.
- 5) Provide periodic updates to local clinical providers on key risk areas so that the healthcare community can act as a sentinel for early disease detection.

County Advocacy to Secure Increased State Funding for the Exide Assessment and Cleanup

For the past two years, the County has urged DTSC to allocate sufficient funding for the Exide assessment and cleanup. On January 25 and 26, 2016, Supervisor Solis, the County's Sacramento Advocates, DPH and County Counsel staff, and community members met with State legislators and legislative staff to urge the Governor and the Legislative leadership to increase funding for the assessment and the cleanup of the properties affected by Exide. Supervisor Solis testified before the Assembly Environmental Safety and Toxic Materials Committee, and emphasized that additional funding is necessary to ensure that the affected homes are immediately assessed and the most contaminated homes cleaned-up to help the thousands of low-income families whose lives have been significantly impacted by Exide. On February 17, 2016, Governor Jerry Brown proposed an additional

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\$176.6 million for the FY 2015-16 State Budget.

On February 22, 2016, Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de León and Senator Ricardo Lara amended SB 93 to allocate the \$176.6 million proposed by Governor Brown, and the bill is awaiting a hearing before the Assembly Budget Committee. On February 25, 2016, the County took a support position on SB 93 and the Sacramento advocates are working with legislators, legislative staff, and Administration officials to convey the County's support for the bill.

The Chief Executive Officer and the County's Sacramento advocates will continue to actively advocate for this measure to secure its passage, and will keep the Board apprised of these efforts.

Monthly updates on the work related to Exide will be provided, as directed by your Board. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information.

CAH:ab

Attachment

c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

Contamination from the Exide Battery Plant: Los Angeles County's Response

Exide's operations resulted in the release of harmful levels of lead and arsenic into the environment in the communities surrounding Exide's former Vernon facility.

Exposure to high levels of these chemicals increase the risk of cancer, breathing diseases, and learning problems. More than 100,000 people who live, work, and play near and around the former Exide plant may be at risk. To protect the public's health, specially-trained workers are cleaning up affected homes and yards in these areas.

Exide and the California Department of Toxic Substance Control are responsible for all cleanup activities. However, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is working with affected communities to make sure the cleanup is successful and responsive to the community's needs. During the next few weeks, you may see County staff taking these actions:

L.A. County's Response to Contamination from Exide

ACTION 1

FIND



Quickly find
contaminated areas.

ACTION 2

CLEAN



Facilitate lead removal and
cleaning of homes, yards,
and public spaces.

ACTION 3

INFORM



Provide information, health
screenings, and other resources
to community members.

EH-EH-0037-01 (2/23/16)

Los Angeles County's Response to Contamination from the Exide Battery Plant: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about Soil Testing for Lead in Homes around Exide

Exide's operations resulted in the release of harmful levels of lead and arsenic into the environment in the communities surrounding Exide's former Vernon facility. To protect the public's health, specially-trained workers are cleaning up affected homes and yards in these areas. During the next few weeks, you may see County staff taking the actions listed below.



This sheet relates to **Action 1: Quickly Find Contaminated Areas**. Testing soil for lead is the only way to find areas that need to be cleaned up. Read more about the benefits of getting your home's soil tested for lead.

1. How can lead affect my health?

Eating lead or breathing excessive levels of lead dust can cause lead poisoning. This can hurt the brain, kidneys, liver, and other organs. Kids less than 6 years old and pregnant women are at higher risk. In kids, lead poisoning affects their growth, learning, and behavior. In pregnant women, lead poisoning causes high blood pressure, the baby to be born too early (premature birth), or losing the baby (miscarriage).

Most people who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick. The only way to know if you have lead poisoning is with a blood lead test. Signs of possible lead poisoning include headaches, nausea, weakness, and trouble eating, sleeping, or paying attention.

EH-EH-0038-01 (2/23/16)

2. Why should I let the County test my soil for lead?

High levels of lead have been found in some soil samples taken from properties near Exide. Families can be exposed to this lead by playing in or walking on the affected soil, bringing it into the house on their shoes, or by eating unwashed fruit or vegetables grown in the soil. Pets might also bring lead into the home from the soil outside.

Allowing the County to test your soil for lead will help you:

- Know if the soil around your home has high levels of lead;
- Learn how to lower your exposure to lead if it is found in your soil; and
- Assure that your home is identified and prioritized for future clean-up activities.

All testing and clean-up will be at NO COST to the property owner or tenants.

3. What happens after my soil is tested for lead?

After your soil is tested, if elevated levels of lead that pose a health concern are present, your property will be placed into one of three priority categories identified by the California Department of Toxic Substance Control. The yards with the highest lead levels and greatest risk of exposure people to lead, will be cleaned up first.

Priority Level	Definition
Priority 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yards with soil lead levels over 1,000 parts per million.• These levels found anywhere on the property are viewed as a health hazard and will be cleaned up first.
Priority 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yards with soil lead levels between 400 parts per million and 1,000 parts per million.• Areas where kids play that have these levels are viewed as a health hazard and will be cleaned up after Priority 1.
Priority 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yards with soil lead levels between 80 parts per million and 400 parts per million.• These areas will still be included for clean-up after Priority 1 and 2.

4. What can I do to protect my family until the soil is cleaned up?

- Do not let kids play on bare soil, when possible
- Take off shoes before coming into your home
- Wet mop floors instead of dry sweeping
- Wipe windowsills and other surfaces where dust collects with a wet cloth
- Wash hands and toys often
- Request a free blood lead test. Call the **Blood Lead Screening Hotline at 844-888-2290**.
Free blood lead testing is available to any person who lives, works, or goes to school in the communities near Exide. All results are confidential.

Lead

1. What is lead?

Lead is a metal found in our environment. It can be found naturally in soil, rocks, air, and water. It can also be found due to industrial activities, like making batteries, building materials, and metal products (like cooking and eating utensils). Lead has also been added to some foods and supplements (vitamins).

2. How are you exposed to lead?

You have contact with lead when you:

- Eat lead-based paint chips or peels from homes built before 1978
- Work in a high risk job (like car mechanic or welder) where you touch, breath in, or bring home dust that has lead in it
- Touch dust or soil that has lead in it and then put your fingers in your mouth by mistake
- Drink water or eat candy, food, or spices that have lead in them
- Take herbal or natural supplements that have lead in them
- Use remedies that have lead in them like Greta, Azarcon, pay-loo-ah, Ghasard, Ba-baw-san, or Daw Tway
- Use makeup that has lead in it like Surma and Kohl
- Use pots/dishes that are old, handmade, or not made in the U.S.
- Have a bullet inside of your body

3. How can lead affect your health?

Eating lead or breathing lead dust can cause lead poisoning. This can hurt the brain, kidneys, liver, and other organs. Kids less than 6 years old and pregnant women are at higher risk. In kids, lead poisoning affects their growth, learning, and behavior. In pregnant women, lead poisoning causes high blood pressure, the baby to be born too early (premature birth), or losing the baby (miscarriage).

It may not be possible to reverse damage if the lead level is too high. Signs of lead poisoning may include headaches, nausea, weakness, and trouble eating, sleeping, or paying attention. Most kids who have lead poisoning do not look or act sick.

4. How is lead poisoning tested and treated?

Most of the time, lead poisoning has no symptoms. So, the only way to know is with a blood lead test. If your child is between 6 months to 6 years old, ask your doctor whether to test for lead. Treatment depends on the level of exposure and can range from simply not having contact with the source of lead to taking medicine prescribed by your doctor. There are no known safe levels of lead.



Key Points:

- Lead is a metal that is found in our environment due to nature and industrial activities, such as making batteries.
- Eating lead or breathing lead dust can cause lead poisoning.
- Lead poisoning can hurt the brain, kidneys, liver, and other organs. It rarely causes symptoms and requires a blood test to confirm.
- Lead poisoning can cause damage even at very low levels.

For more information:

**Los Angeles County,
Department of Public Health**
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lead/index.htm>

[http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/
AreasofInterest/lead.htm](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/AreasofInterest/lead.htm)

**California Department of
Public Health**
[https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/
CLPPB/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CLPPB/Pages/default.aspx)

**Centers for Disease Control and
Prevention (CDC)**
<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/>

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5. How can you prevent lead poisoning?

Tip	More Information
Get Tested for Lead	Ask your doctor about a lead test if your child is between 6 months to 6 years old
Eat Healthy Foods	<p>Avoid foods high in fat and give these healthy foods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron-rich foods: Beans, cereals with iron, lean meat, fish, tofu • Calcium-rich foods: Milk, yogurt, cheese, dark-green vegetables, and canned salmon • Vitamin C: Oranges, tomatoes, limes, bell peppers, broccoli, berries • Water: Drinking fluids help remove lead from the body
Keep Your Home's Painted Surfaces in Good Repair	<p>Don't let paint start to chip or peel in homes built before 1978</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never dry sand/scrape painted surfaces so you don't make and spread lead dust • Use lead safe work practices for any repairs of painted surfaces • If the property owner won't fix peeling paint hazards, call 1-888-700-9995
Keep Your Home Clean and Dust-Free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet mop floors instead of dry sweeping to stop the spread of dust • Wipe window sills and other surfaces often with a wet cloth • Use a vacuum that has a HEPA filter or use an allergen filter bag

Steps to lower risk of lead exposure

Tips for communities near the Exide Technologies battery recycling plant in Vernon, CA

Wash hands and toys often

- Lower hand-to-mouth transfer of lead dust or soil by washing your children's hands after playing outside, before eating, and at bedtime. Wash their toys often.

Do not let kids play on bare soil, when possible

- Playing on grass or sand can lower exposure to bare soils that may have lead. Watch your kids play outside and avoid contact with bare soil.

Take off shoes before coming into your home

- This helps to lower the chance of bringing lead into your home. Also note that pets may bring lead into the home from the soil outside.
- Wash lead tainted clothes separately.

Request a free blood lead test, call the Blood Lead Screening Hotline at 844-888-2290

- Free blood lead testing is available to any person who lives, works, or goes to school in the communities near Exide. All results are confidential. If you have more lead-related questions, call: **1-800-LA-4-LEAD (1-800-524-5323)**.

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